



# Songs of the Open Road



English 12: Senior Elective  
3<sup>rd</sup> Trimester 2016

Mr. Grunner

## Course Description

Since Whitman, ‘afoot and lighthearted,’ took to the open road and young Huck Finn decided to ‘light out for the Territory,’ the road has stood as symbol for the escape from the constraints of civilized society into the freedom offered by the journey into the unknown. This course offers students the opportunity to spend time focusing on a quintessential theme in American literature, the journey narrative, as developed and celebrated in the ‘road novel.’ Not necessarily a theme shared by all road novels, the texts we will read and discuss are also joined by a common thread, namely, the subject of transgressive love. Throughout the trimester, we will dedicate our time together to the following works: Walt Whitman’s “Song of the Open Road” from his *Leaves of Grass*, Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road*, Patricia Highsmith’s *The Price of Salt*, and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*. We will also supplement our reading with the viewing of various classic American road films!

## Required Texts

“Song of the Open Road,” Walt Whitman  
*On the Road*, Jack Kerouac (Penguin)  
*The Price of Salt*, Patricia Highsmith (Dover)  
*Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov (Vintage)

## ☞ METHODOLOGY

Class discussion; student presentations; the rare lecture; perchance a field trip.

## ☞ NUMBER OF CLASS SESSIONS

We will meet three times (3x) per cycle for forty-minute sessions save, of course, for the B-days that fall on Tuesdays.

## ☞ EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

**Homework:** Students are expected to come to each class session (1) having read every last word of an assigned text and (2) prepared to discuss the text with the class. The success of this endeavor rests upon your shoulders.

**Writing:** Through the course of the trimester, students will compose two intelligent and engaging response essays and a longer final essay. I will distribute prompts for all three essays.

**Tests and Quizzes:** Simply put—don't make me. If I sense that you are taking a relaxed approach to completing the assigned readings, quizzes, the likes of which you have not seen in your time at Regis thus far, shall rain down upon your heads.

**Other assessments:** Class participation will count for 30% of your final grade and will be determined at the end of the trimester.

## ☞ GRADING POLICIES

I shall calculate your final grade using the following breakdown:

- Short Essay 1 (20%)
- Short Essay 2 (20%)
- Final Essay (30%)
- Participation (30%)

## ☞ MISCELLANEOUS

In my experience, laptop computers are more likely to tempt a student into distraction than to aid him in his learning and note-taking. Thus, use of a laptop computer will not be permitted during class discussion. After all, when coming together as a group to discuss a piece of literature which we have all spent time reading and thinking about, there is absolutely no need to use a laptop. Furthermore, cell phones should remain on silent and, ideally, should be left in your bags.

Reading Schedule (as always, subject to change)

22 February (D)	“Song of the Open Road,” Walt Whitman
24 February (A)	
26 February (C)	
29 February (D)	<i>On The Road</i> , Jack Kerouac
2 March (A)	
4 March (C)	
7 March (D)	
9 March (A)	
14 March (C)	
18 March (A)	<i>The Price of Salt</i> , Patricia Highsmith
23 March (D)	
4 April (A)	
7 April (C)	
11 April (D)	
13 April (A)	<i>Lolita</i> , Vladimir Nabokov
15 April (C)	
18 April (D)	
20 April (A)	
25 April (C)	
28 April (A)	
2 May (C)	Concluding Discussion
6 May (A)	